

Chapter 1

Background Information



Mayor's Floodplain Task Force Charge Statement

August 21, 2001

The goal of the Mayor's Floodplain Task Force is to formulate recommendations regarding the development of permanent floodplain standards that address the natural functions of floodplains and reduction of future flooding hazards in Lincoln and Lancaster County, while being sensitive to business, environmental and neighborhood interests and recognizing the need to sustain long-term economic development opportunities. The Task Force is expected to:

- **Utilize the information from the Corps of Engineers (COE) floodplain study;**
- **Identify other floodplain management alternatives that should be considered that are not part of the COE technical study;**
- **Evaluate and make recommendations regarding policy issues relative to floodplains;**
- **Make recommendations for additional cost analysis or other evaluation needed relative to the impact of alternatives on private development costs, public infrastructure costs, or natural resources;**
- **Utilize all the information to make final recommendations to the Mayor, and, if applicable, to the Lancaster County Board regarding revised floodplain policies and standards for the City and County.**

The Task Force will work closely with staff from the City and the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (NRD), who will provide support and guidance. Additional technical or facilitation resources from other sources or agencies will be sought by the City or NRD as needed. The Task Force is expected to utilize the information from the Corps of Engineers Study to formulate recommendations during May and June of 2002 in order that new standards could be drafted and adopted prior to the end of 2002 (see attached schedule).

Facilitation and Process for Developing Recommendations

The development of the recommendations by the Mayor's Floodplain Task Force was facilitated by the Heartland Center for Leadership Development. Several design considerations guided the development of an overall plan for Task Force management. Among these considerations, **participation was the priority**, with education regarding floodplain issues, information needs and attendance at meetings also prominent. Staff and consultants from the Heartland Center met for work sessions prior to each meeting of the Task Force to design an agenda and respond to requests from the Task Force Members. The role of Heartland Center staff also included the **facilitation of each Task Force meeting**.

Throughout the process, the **membership greatly influenced the design through requests for information and process suggestions**. This influence reflects the high degree of participation on the part of the membership. The need for information was, in fact, one reason that the timeline of the Task Force extended well past what was anticipated. Requests for new maps, studies and reports developed as the Task Force explored issues together and discovered personal and group needs for education about floodplains.

Attendance was a key concern. All Task Force members, having been appointed by Mayor Wesely, were vital to each meeting. While substitute representatives attended in place of one member, attendance records for all meetings are included in the appendices of this report. The City staff utilized a **web site** to encourage attendance, post notices and reports, and as an additional follow-up to email and regular mail communications and materials distribution. The Task Force always reviewed dates for meetings, and reminder phone calls were made prior to meetings. At several points, **additional meetings** were added, and the regular time and place adjusted, to offer an option for members that had difficulty with attendance.

Meetings were designed to provide **both presentations and small group discussions**. The Task Force often worked in two or three small groups in order to maximize participation and balance discussion. A variety of guest speakers representing areas of technical expertise made presentations during meetings. A list of those individuals and topics is included in Appendix F.

As the policy recommendations developed the group decided to **consider “New Growth Areas” first** and then to consider parallel recommendations for the “Existing Urban Area.” This separation proved to be very useful since the issues and information regarding the New Growth Areas required extensive discussion. When the group turned their attention to the **“Existing Urban Area”, the length of discussion was reduced** because information and debate on many of the issues had already taken place in previous sessions. Recommendations were also broadened to address policies for both the City and County.

A **polling process** was developed that allowed each member present to **agree, disagree or offer specific word changes** to a draft policy. The results of these polling exercises are included in the appendices, but it should be noted that the procedure itself allowed for considerable discussion and evolution of draft statements as the group worked together. The conversations regarding specific statements proved very **useful in working toward consensus** or in clarifying positions outside the consensus. Some Task Force members chose to abstain from the polling process, left early or were absent from the room, so attendance and polling results may seem to conflict. The polling **results reflect**, however, those **members present during that particular discussion**.

The Task force acknowledged that there are **other significant stakeholders** who should be made aware of the recommendations and who will have opportunity for input as the decision-makers continue public participation and discussion.